

Bill Helps High Schoolers Bike and Walk Safely to School

Washington, DC – Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore) today introduced the Safe Routes to High Schools Act, H.R. 4021, which would expand the popular Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) program to include high schools. SRTS works with parents, schools, community leaders and local, state, and federal governments to improve kids' health by enabling them to walk and bike to class. Projects aim to improve safety, reduce traffic and air pollution and encourage active ways of getting to school by implementing education programs, small scale infrastructure projects – such as bike lanes, sidewalks, cross walks, and bike racks – and other programs to make biking and walking to school safer, easier and more accessible for students.

“We develop our exercise habits at an early age,” **said Congressman Blumenauer.** “Of any group, high school students suffer the highest rates of obesity. By taking simple steps to encourage biking and walking to school, we help foster lifelong healthy habits. The Safe Routes to Schools program has proven successful, and by extending it to high schools we can encourage adolescents to begin and maintain physically active habits. At a time when people are working to save where they can, improving community livability gives a boost to kids' heart rates and parents' budgets.”

The Safe Routes to Schools program has over 4,500 programs across the country, despite not currently including high schools. High school students represent a population most likely to suffer from high rates of obesity and also most in need of flexible, independent, and low-cost transportation choices, especially in troubling economic times.

Obesity rates for children between the ages of 12 and 19 have more than tripled in the past fifteen years, with 17.6% of high school age children now classified as obese. This has a profound impact on the long term health of our nation, as 80% of obese children become obese adults, putting them at a higher risk for diabetes, hypertension, cancer, and other chronic health conditions, and placing an increased long-term burden on our healthcare system.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that children be active for at least 60 minutes five times a week, but statistics show that activity levels drop rapidly as students head into their high school years. Increasing opportunities for adolescents to be physically active will help combat the rise in teenage obesity.

Blumenauer Introduces Bill to Boost Kids' Heart Rates, Parents' Budgets

Friday, 06 November 2009 04:51

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